BOOKS

The M4 Sherman at War: The European Theatre, 1942-1945 by Steven J. Zaloga (70 pages, $13.95).

D-Day Tank Warfare: Armored Combat in the Normandy Campaign, June-August 1944 (72 pages, $13.95)

Tank Warfare in Korea, 1950-53 by Steven J. Zaloga and George Balin (72 pages, $9.95).

Concord Publications Company, Hong Kong.

These three booklets written by Steven J. Zaloga and George Balin cover the photographic history of the tanks that engaged in armored combat in the European Theater of Operations during World War II and in the Korean War half a decade later. The booklets are aimed at military modelers and include detailed diagrams and photos of famous tanks, such as *Hauptmann* Michael Wittman's Tiger I, presumably so that those with the talent can build their own versions. In this regard, the works have more appeal to the military buff than the military professional. On a different level, however, these booklets are valuable in examining the life cycle of a tank. By perusing the photos and captions that fill these works, one can see the adaptations and improvisations that armored crewmen in World War II and Korea had to make in order to survive in the harsh environment of combat. Of all the tanks in these wars, no other was more extensively modified — both officially and unofficially — than the M4 Sherman.

Few tanks in the history of armored warfare have proved as versatile as the Sherman. The United States produced more Sherman tanks — 49,234 in all — during World War II than any other tank produced by any other nation. Because of the relatively late start of American rearmament, the War Department's decision to produce the M4 had far-reaching consequences. Simply put, the Army had to live with the Sherman, since its successor did not appear on the battlefields of Europe until 1945, and then only in small numbers. The technological characteristics of the M4 tank significantly influenced Allied operations in Africa, Sicily, Italy, France, Germany, and in the next war in Korea. The appearance of superior German tanks — the Mark V Panther and the Mark VI Tiger — forced U.S. units to respond with *ad hoc* measures to ensure their survival and accomplish their missions. Engagements with more powerful enemy vehicles forced units to adjust their tactics, techniques, and procedures in order to survive.

The M4 Sherman evolved over time as a result of product improvements intended to correct the deficiencies of the tank. The Ordnance Department could have done more to correct the greatest weakness of the Sherman — the low muzzle velocity of its main gun — but the Army did not realize the changing nature of tank combat until the huge losses in Normandy forced the Army's leadership to face the stark reality of modern armored warfare. In the ensuing battles of France and Germany, weight of numbers and the application of a sound combined arms doctrine enabled the Armored Force to prevail over the panzers of the *Wehrmacht,* despite the Sherman's limitations.

Armored crewmen were the first to realize its problems and did what they could to fix them. In one booklet, there is a wonderful photo of Gen. George S. Patton, Jr. rebuking a tank crew for adding sand bags around their vehicle. Patton believed the extra weight led to premature engine breakdowns. Tank crews who had to fight the poorly armored tank widely ignored Patton's orders on the subject. Other crews added logs; at least one encased the turret in cement!

When designed in 1941, the M4 Sherman was a logical and appropriate choice to execute U.S. Army mechanized doctrine as it then existed. The experiences of World War II in Europe convinced the Army's leadership that American antiarmor doctrine was wrong and that tanks had to fight other tanks on the battlefield. That change in attitude altered the design parameters of future armored vehicles; the primary mission of American tanks after World War II was to engage and destroy enemy tanks.

If anyone had lingering doubts about the essential role of the tank in battle, the Korean War dispelled them. The T-34/85 tanks of the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) outmatched American M24 light tanks and the 2.36-inch rocket launcher in the first month of the war. Not until M26 Pershing and M46 Patton tanks and a larger 3.5-inch rocket launcher appeared did the forces of the United Nations gain armored supremacy in Korea. Interestingly enough, over half of the tanks used by U.N. forces were World War II-vintage M4A3E8 Shermans, which proved comparable to the T-34/85 in combat. The key was the superior training of American tankers compared to their North Korean counterparts.

The M4 Sherman was obsolescent by the end of World War II, but the tank proved to be an adequate — and adaptable — combat vehicle if the crewmen who operated it were well-trained. "In spite of the flaws and shortcomings of our equipment and our training," wrote Brigadier General Anthony F. Daskevich to the author a few years ago, "the soldiers made the equipment do the job — sometimes by changing the equipment, sometimes by applying new and different techniques to fit the situation at hand, and sometimes in learning how to work together on the battlefield, taking advantage of all weapons systems in concert." The lesson for today is clear. In an era of declining budgets, the U.S. Army must once again return to its roots and learn how to adapt the equipment on hand to accomplish its assigned missions. The M1-series Abrams tank is here to stay for some time to come. The Armored Force must wring the most out of its capabilities, for its replacement is nowhere on the horizon. We as an Army have become too comfortable with the proverbial technological "silver bullet." What these photographic histories remind us is that it has not always been that way. The greatest strength of the American soldier is his ability to learn and adapt.

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Strategy and Tactics of the Salvadoran FMLN Guerrillas: Last Battle of the Cold War, Blueprint for Future Conflicts by José Angel Moroni Bracamonte and David E. Spencer. Praeger Publishers, 88 Post Road, Westport, Conn. 1995. 216 pages. $59.95.

The regular military forces of El Salvador defeated an externally supplied communist insurgency in 1992 after approximately 12 years of conflict. *Strategy and Tactics of the Salvadoran FMLN Guerrillas* addresses this successful employment of conventional forces to combat and defeat a disciplined, motivated, and logistically sound insurgency.

This work details tactics, techniques, and procedures employed by FMLN forces. Reproduction of FMLN mission orders and analysis of both successful and unsuccessful tactical engagements provide a thorough depiction of guerrilla actions. FMLN after-action review procedures and lessons learned are also evaluated.

As military professionals, it is critical that we seek out threat evaluations beyond national military experiences. For many potential threats, neither Soviet-style conventional techniques nor unconventional warfare tactics will be viable. Forces throughout the world continue to evolve doctrine compatible with their unique social, operational, manning, and logistical circumstances. Threat studies from the Gulf War, the Cold War, and the Vietnam War are not all-encompassing.

American military forces remain committed to operations other than war, and such commitments may increase in the future. There are many potential threats today, and the more styles of warfare we make

ourselves familiar with, the more rapid our evaluation of the next threats we face.

The hardbound price of this book will prevent its inclusion in most personal libraries: Instead, consider urging post library systems to acquire and stock works of this genre. *Strategy and Tactics of the Salvadoran FMLN Guerrillas* reads well, and the translations of military terms, concepts, and conclusions from Spanish into English are well executed.

If the authors are correct in their assessment of the Salvadoran insurgency as a "blueprint for future conflicts," then this book can provide us both the schematics and marginal notations of that blueprint. Regardless of the prescience of Messrs. Bracamonte and Spencer, it is worthwhile to have a threat doctrinal and operational model for someone besides the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany. If you are unable to read this work, find a work of the same type and read that.

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Dark Moon: Eighth Army Special Operations in the Korean War by Ed Evanhoe, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 1995. 193 pages. $25.95.

Within "The Forgotten War" of Korea (June 1950-July 1953), few people today remember the epic battles of the Pusan Perimeter, Inchon, or the Chosin Reservoir. Fewer still know anything at all about the brazen special operations conducted by the U.S. Eighth Army behind enemy lines in North Korea during that brutal conflict.

Ed Evanhoe's first book, *Dark Moon,* dramatically reveals the bittersweet American and South Korean special operations and partisan efforts from 1950 to 1953. As a Korean War veteran and career intelligence operative specializing in Far East operations, Evanhoe is well-suited to tell this remarkable cloak and dagger tale. This is the sixth book in the Naval Institute's Special Warfare Series.

Shortly after thousands of North Korean troops stormed across the border into South Korea in June 1950, it was quickly apparent that American intelligence efforts were sadly and tragically lacking. Little cooperation existed among the impotent intelligence agencies, as agency jealousy and rivalry thwarted effective organization and collection. The State Department, the military, and the newly-formed CIA all pointed fingers at each other and clamored for a solution.

In response, within the U.S. Eighth Army, a disparate collection of colorful and imaginative individuals surfaced, providing the nucleus of talent and guts that launched the special operations side of intelligence gathering. Although supported by several CIA agents, British SAS officers, and a Marine, most of the Eighth Army's special operations work was performed by U.S. Army Rangers and Airborne soldiers, as well as volunteer South Korean soldiers and anticommunist partisans. Initially because of serious military setbacks, lack of logistical resources, and myopic vision, higher headquarters could not devote much manpower or equipment to special operations. As usual, the necessary resources were begged, borrowed, and scrounged. Captured Japanese and Russian weapons and ammunition, obsolete radios, even German SS uniforms, and hijacked boats outfitted the early special operations. Soon, however, the new leader of this resourceful group, Colonel John H. McGee, could begin to train and field spies, saboteurs, assassins, raiding parties, and guerrilla units.

Using partisan-controlled islands off the east and west coasts of North Korea, the special operations group mounted numerous intelligence missions into North Korea. Later in the war, airborne operations were added to insert spies and saboteurs into central North Korea. Evanhoe's unabashed accounts of these operations are riveting in their action and suspense. With their motley collection of weapons, equipment, and characters, McGee's men fight the North Koreans and Red Chinese in their own backyard, destroying trains, ambushing unsuspecting enemy units, assassinating communist officials, blowing up bridges and tunnels, and creating rear area havoc.

Several missions, done as pranks, without command approval, also produced far-reaching results. Frogs painted fluorescent orange, airdropped into North Korea, convinced the communists that the Americans were using bacteriological warfare. A large, somewhat unconventional explosion in Wonsan harbor had the communists (and most of the Free World) believing that someone had detonated an atomic bomb. Best of all, an anticommunist partisan unit wearing German SS uniforms resulted in a Russian complaint that Germany had entered the war!

This is not all a success story, however, as betrayal, incompetence, tragic accidents, enemy counter-guerrilla operations, bad weather, and Murphy's Law conspired to disrupt missions and cost valuable lives. The dedication, valor, and sacrifice of the Americans, British, and South Koreans is stunning and truly serves as a tribute to the spirit of adventure of all those involved in special operations.

Evanhoe's narrative is crisp and vivid with just the right balance of fact and detail, and is well-supported by maps and photos. This is a superb story of triumph and tragedy in America's "Forgotten War."

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Hell On Wheels: The 2d Armored Division by Donald E. Houston, Presidio Press, Novato, Calif., 1995. 466 pp. $14.95.

Originally published in 1977, this second paperback edition of Donald E. Houston's *Hell On Wheels* is a welcome addition to the plethora of books published to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II. Houston's history of the 2d Armored Division is a first-rate account of the division from the day it was activated until the summer of 1945, when it was notified for return to the United States. Mr. Houston's work is carefully researched and balanced. Houston tells the story well and draws conclusions. Accordingly, *Hell On Wheels* is no slapdash narrative, long on hyperbole, and short on analysis.

Houston's discussion of the division's early history is of particular interest, not only because George S. Patton served as the division's first commander, but because of the rapid expansion, ongoing modernization, and continuing experimentation which characterized the early months of the 2d Armored Division's history. Those were exciting and turbulent days as the division learned to operate new equipment, experimented with new tactics, and assimilated hordes of new soldiers, all while conducting collective training to prepare for war. Those of us who complain of shortages and too much to do would do well to read early chapters of *Hell On Wheels.* The 2d Armored Division's role in the Louisiana Maneuvers is of direct interest for serving soldiers. Through the eyes of soldiers who served fifty years ago, we are able to gain insight into the contemporary Army's experiments with Force XXI.

The combat history of one of the Army's premier World War II divisions extends from North Africa, to Sicily, the Normandy Breakout, Aachen, the Bulge, and finally the culminating battles of the war in the West. Houston tells the story clearly and shows a division whose soldiers make mistakes, but learn from them. Houston ably weaves first-person accounts into the fabric of his narrative while remaining sufficiently removed to criticize when appropriate. It is this technique that assures the validity and importance of *Hell On Wheels.* Mr. Houston's work will remain useful for the casual reader, the serious historian, and the serving soldier.

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